

Building Strong Bones With Dried Plums: What Men Need To Know



(NAPSA)—Conversations about osteoporosis and the measures that prevent and treat this bone-weakening disease typically focus on it as a women's issue. Although we often think of men having larger, stronger bones than women, that's not always the case—men are also at risk for developing osteoporosis. In fact, 2 million men have the disease and another 12 million are at risk for developing it.

Not only are men at a significant risk, but surprisingly, it is for many of the same reasons as women. Low and decreasing levels of hormones can cause an imbalance in the bone-remodeling process, with more old bone dissolving than new bone reforming. Although it is the decrease in estrogen production that occurs with menopause that increases women's vulnerability to the effects of osteoporosis, men experience a decrease in testosterone and insulin-like growth factor (IGF-I) as they age. Heredity and lifestyle habits such as smoking, excessive alcohol use and inadequate exercise can also lead to poor bone health in both men and women.

"Men should take many of the same steps as women to protect their bones, including getting enough calcium and vitamin D in their diet, engaging in weight-bearing exercise and changing unhealthy lifestyle habits," says Brenda J. Smith, Ph.D., Associate Professor & Assistant Director of Research in the department of surgery at the University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center. "Dairy products—rich in bone-building calcium—are the foods we associate most readily with bone health. But plant-based foods, like fruits and vegetables, may also play an important role in increasing bone mass."

Studies indicate that men and women who consume diets rich in

fruits and vegetables have higher bone density and suggest that phytonutrients—health-protective compounds in plant-based foods—may be the reason for the positive effects of fruits and vegetables on bone metabolism.

California Dried Plums offer a convenient option for men looking to add more fruit to their diets. Dried plums are a rich source of several micronutrients involved in bone metabolism, including potassium, vitamin K and boron. In fact, a recently published animal study conducted by researchers at the University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center indicated that dried plums prevented hormone-related deterioration of the bones of male subjects, preserving bone mass.

Currently, a study is under way at Florida State University examining the bone health benefits of dried plums in women in a year-long clinical trial. "Dried Plums completely reverse loss of bone density and structural properties, observations unique to dried plums among the many foods we have examined in our laboratory," says Dr. Bahram H. Arjmandi, principal investigator of the Florida State University study.

Dried plums can easily be incorporated daily into meals or snacks at any time of the day. "I like to add dried plums to hot or cold cereals, on turkey or chicken salad sandwiches or as an afternoon snack," says Leslie Bonci, M.P.H., R.D., director of sports nutrition at the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center and spokesperson for the California Dried Plum Board. "Not only do they add nutritional value, but they're an easy way to boost flavor."

Dried plums are not only great tasting and versatile, but are also great for protecting bone health without any adverse effects.